(iii) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes.

(iv) A net work of protected areas has been established.

(v) Ministry of Environment and Forests has prepared a National Forestry Action Programme to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree resources for ecological stability and people centered development through increased investments in conservation and development of forest resources.

(vi) There is earmarking of plan budget for North Eastern Region.

Viability of eco-tourism

2110. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item "Is eco-tourism economically viable in India", appearing in The Times of India dated 23rd February, 2002;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government would undertake a study on the possibility of economic viability of eco- tourism in the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The objective of eco-tourism is to create greater awareness about importance of natural ecosystem and the need for preserving the same. Eco-tourism has to be a low key affair under which economic benefits accrue to the local communities, and their dependence on forest produce from National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries is minimised. Economic viability cannot be a sole criteria for success of eco-tourism. Wildlife Institute of India has carried out several studies/workshops to develop perspective plans which address economical, social and environmental concerns of eco-tourism.